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The situation in the Middle East

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Seventy-third year

Identical letters dated 12 November 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I am writing to you in response to the identical letters dated 26 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative Israel addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2018/960).

Lebanon reiterates that it is profoundly concerned at the systematic campaign of allegations and repeated threats that Israel has mounted against it. The international community recognizes that Lebanon is striving to stabilize further the country by reactivating State institutions, addressing the repercussions of the influx of displaced persons from Syria, defeating the menace of terrorism that pervades the entire region and fostering the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Meanwhile, Israel presses ahead with its unilateral approach, which is counter to the international consensus, by repeating its lies about and threats against the Lebanese people, Lebanese individuals and the country's infrastructure.

This campaign culminated with the speech that the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, delivered before the General Assembly on 27 September 2018, a speech in which he made false allegations and told lies. The Permanent Representative of Israel reiterated those false allegations and lies in his identical letters dated 26 October 2018 (S/2018/960). Although those letters consist of nothing more than various fabricated allegations that are not based on facts, they are nonetheless very serious and grave if only because the author threatens Lebanon and its people and attempts to incite the international community against Lebanon. Those letters are just another in a series of threats that various Israeli officials in turn have made against Lebanon. In that connection, I should like to draw attention, for example, to the words of the Minister of Culture of the Israeli Government, Naftali Bennett, who threatened to send Lebanon back to the Middle Ages and said that Lebanese institutions and infrastructure, the airport, power stations, road junctions and Lebanese Army barracks would be considered legitimate targets. At the time those statements were made, Lebanon called upon the Security Council to address the matter with the seriousness required, and it now reiterates its calls upon the Council,

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which is entrusted with upholding the Charter of the United Nations. Such threats clearly violate paragraph 4 of Article II of the Charter of the United Nations, which provides that all members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of Lebanon has always been transparent in its dealings and with respect to establishing facts. Accordingly, the Ministry organized a field tour of the three locations around Beirut International Airport at which Netanyahu claimed there are missiles. All accredited ambassadors to Lebanon were invited to take part, and the representatives of 73 States participated. Those who took part in the field tour witnessed the reality on the ground and they understood that the Israeli allegations are false.

Lebanon categorically rejects the efforts of Israel to sow terror and target one the pillars of the Lebanese economy by attempting to tarnish the image of Beirut International Airport and to frighten foreign States and their nationals, in order to stop them from travelling to Lebanon. That course of action constitutes an economic war whose effects are no less serious than the destructive effects of Israel's repeated attacks on Lebanon, the most recent of which was the war that Israel waged in 2006. It should be noted that Israel launched the first of its aggression against Lebanon decades ago when it specifically targeted Beirut airport in 1968, destroying 13 civilian aircraft.

Indeed, not even Lebanese sport and the contributions that it has made to achieving sustainable development are spared by Israel, which levels allegations against Al-Ahed Sports Club and its corporate sponsors. Founded in 1966, it is one of the oldest sports clubs in Lebanon. The club is the current champion of Lebanese football and represents it in the Asian Football Confederation Cup.

Lebanon fears that these attacks against Lebanese sport and the economy are an attempt by Israel to secure prior absolution for future attacks.

Meanwhile, Israel continues to covet oil deposits that are in Lebanese territorial waters. From the time that oil exploration contracts were granted, Israel has intensified its efforts to seize some of those deposits and create a climate of anxiety and fear by threatening to attack Lebanon. Israel continues to refuse to pay the $856.4 million in compensation that it owes to Lebanon for the damage that Israel caused when it bombed the civilian electric power plant in Jiyeh, causing an oil slick that covered the shores of Lebanon. That amount has been reaffirmed by the General Assembly in a series of resolutions, the most recent of which was resolution 72/209 of 20 December 2017.

It should be noted that, as in his previous in letters, the representative of Israel makes no statement that his country has been fulfilling its obligations under the relevant international resolutions. The letters from the representative of Israel also reflect an incomplete and fragmented reading of the twenty-eighth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004), because no mention is made paragraph 38 of the report. In that paragraph, the Secretary-General clearly states: "I condemn all violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon." Such violations undermine the credibility of the Lebanese security services and generate anxiety among the civilian population. I therefore renew my calls upon Israel to fulfil its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions and withdraw its forces from the northern part of the village of Ghajar and the adjacent area north of the Blue Line, as well as to cease immediately its overflights of Lebanese airspace. These daily Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty by land, sea and air have been documented in dozens of letters of complaint addressed to the Security Council.

In view of the foregoing, Lebanon holds Israel responsible for any measure that might undermine the stability of Lebanon and the region. It also stresses that it is high time for the Security Council to speak forcefully. The Council must reject such attempts by Israel and strive to put an immediate end to them. Moreover, it must stop Israel from continuing to excuse itself from its obligations under international law and binding international resolutions. Israel must be compelled to take responsibility for its wrongful actions and implement the relevant international resolutions. It must also be stopped from using the pretext of "self-defence" to launch devastating wars that have and continue to cause suffering for the peoples of the region, not least the people of Lebanon.

Lebanon requests the Security Council to take the measures required to deter Israel from continuing to commit serious violations of the sovereignty of Lebanon and to threaten the security of Lebanon and the safety of its people.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 38, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bachir Saleh **Azzam**
Counsellor
Chargé d'affaires a.i.